

Selectmen Mull Fate of Ribbons

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

Duxbury selectmen discussed the issue of the Round Pond ribbon memorial to fallen U.S. soldiers in Iraq this week, but failed to come to a decision as to whether to let the memorial's creator complete it in the woods or designate another site for a similar tribute.

Two out of three selectmen said they did not favor allowing the memorial to be recre-

ated in the woods on a trail near town-owned Round Pond off Mayflower St., because it meant opening that open space to other types of tributes or artwork in the future.

Selectmen Betsy Sullivan and John Tuffy were opposed to letting memorial creator Ed Hardy, his daughter Heather, and her friend Jason Anthony complete the memorial by

continued on page 15

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continued from page one

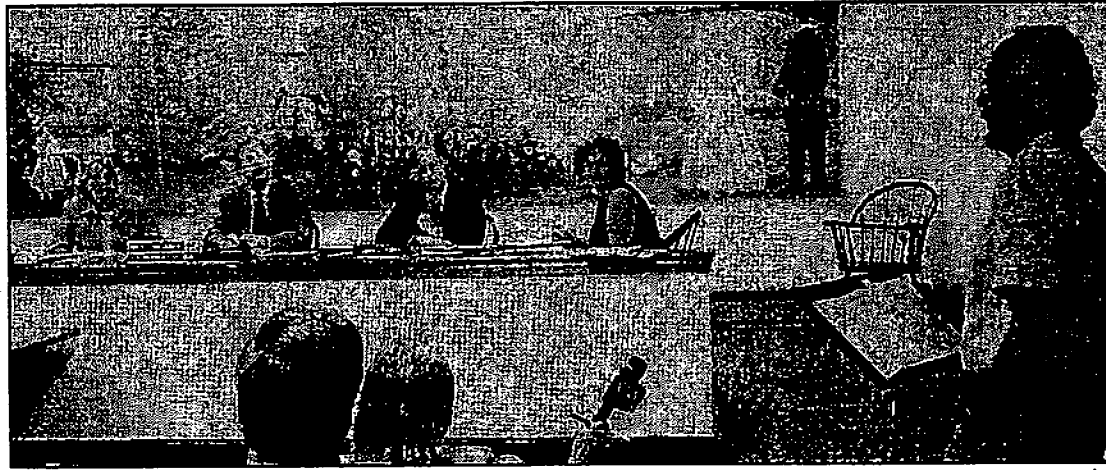
tying yellow ribbons bearing the names of more than 900 fallen US soldiers to trees near Round Pond. Selectmen chairman Andre Martecchini said he felt that recreating the memorial in another place would not have the same impact.

However, as this was the first time selectmen formally discussed the issue on their meeting agenda, Martecchini explained his reasons for ordering that the yellow ribbons that bore the names of 632 soldiers and others killed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan be removed.

Martecchini said he alone made the decision to have the ribbons removed and told Conservation Administrator Joe Grady to do so, but he said he never intended for the ribbons to be discarded as they were.

He reiterated his July 26 apology for those actions. Martecchini said town officials did not want to set the precedent that allowed this type of memorial on town property.

Martecchini read a memo from Town Counsel Robert Troy that said that if a town allows public land to be used as a public forum it cannot



Ed Hardy, who created the memorial in the Round Pond Trails, told selectmen Monday that it should be replaced there and nowhere else.

deny people from using it in this way in the future.

"The issue of the ribbons being erected is not the only issue here," said Martecchini. "There are First Amendment rights and the right to free speech. This is a very emotional issue. We meant no disrespect. It had nothing to do with the message..."

"There are no restraints for what could be said or done on that land in the future," said Sullivan. "The greater responsibility of this board is to protect that land."

Tuffy said that conservation land was a place to reflect, think and get away from the world, "not to be confronted with it."

"Conservation land is not the place to express views,"

Tuffy said.

Selectmen suggested other places for the ribbon memorial to continue, such as the woods adjacent to the Mayflower Cemetery, the town green on Washington St., a wooded town property on Lincoln St. and a small green space at the corner of Park St. and Route 3A.

Sullivan was concerned that should the tribute be allowed to continue at Round Pond, it would be inaccessible for people with mobility problems, such as veterans, and she said that would be "unfair."

Hardy told selectmen that he did not want to undertake any type of memorial at any other location.

"The path in the forest is as

much a part of the memorial as the ribbons," Hardy said. To move the location "would diminish the memorial as it was conceived," he said.

Hardy told the selectmen that it was "unfortunate" that none of them ever saw the ribbons and he said he didn't understand the rush to take them down. When they were removed, Hardy said: "I was saddened, but I wasn't mad. I was empty, but I wasn't angry."

Washington St. resident and former selectman Ruth Rowley chastised the selectmen for how they handled the ribbon tribute. She said she could find no signs on the conservation land about rules and could find no written rules or regulations that said some-

one needed permission to create a memorial on this land. She accused selectmen of violating the Open Meeting laws when making decisions on removing the ribbons and she hoped that because of the poor way town officials handled it, they could find a way to make it right.

Martecchini said he did not violate the Open Meeting law by discussing this issue on the phone with another selectmen. He said he made the decision on his own. Town Manager Rocco Longo was out that day, he said.

William Newman, Commander of Duxbury's American Legion Post 223, told selectmen that the Legion would like to see the ribbon memorial completed at "a suitable location that is recommended by the Board of Selectmen." If an alternative site is selected, Post 223 will offer its support and will observe a Veterans Day ceremony at the site.

Selectmen said they will hold their decision on the ribbon memorial until they are sure that the land is under their control and is not conservation land, as Rowley said it was after she found its acquisition listed in a past town report.